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# METHOD OF LAMINATING LIQUID CRYSTAL SUBSTRATES

# [Abstract]

PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED: To laminate the upper substrate and lower substrate with high produc tivity, free from mixing bubbles into the gap between the lower substrate and the upper substrate.

SOLUTION: Liquid crystal material 4 is dropped in the space surrounded by an annular seal-line 3 on the lower substrate 1 which is arranged in the vacuum chamber 5 where the upper substrate 2 is laid facing to the lower substrate 1 by means of vacuum-chucking. At least one of the substrates is

moved toward the other substrate and pressurized to laminate keeping the inside of the vacuum chamber 5 in a vacuum-exhaust state. This method has the ability not only to prevent the introduction of air bubbles into the gap but also to vacuum chucking the upper substrate 2 reliably using a short-duration vacuum exhausting means by making the inside of the vacuum chamber 5 under pressure of 50-400 Pa.

# [Claim(s)]

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[Claim 1] A method for laminating liquid crystal substrates characterized by including the steps of: dropping a liquid crystal material into a space enclosed with a circular seal line on a lower substrate; arranging the lower substrate within a vacuum chamber; vacuum-absorbing an upper substrate within the vacuum chamber for opposing and arranging it to and on the lower substrate; setting a pressure inside the vacuum chamber to 50 to 400 Pa; and moving and pressing at least one substrate toward and against the other one; and joining both substrates.

[Claim 2] A method for laminating liquid crystal substrates characterized by including the steps of: dropping a liquid crystal material into a space enclosed with a circular seal line on a lower substrate; arranging the lower substrate within a vacuum chamber; vacuum-absorbing an upper substrate within the vacuum chamber for opposing and arranging it to and on the lower substrate; vacuum-exhausting the inside of the vacuum chamber for setting its pressure to a predetermined pressure; moving and pressing at least one substrate toward and against the other one so that the upper substrate becomes an inclined state in order to arrange one end of the upper substrate

relative to the seal line at a predetermined gap, when the other end of the upper substrate is contacted with the seal line; and joining both substrates.

[Claim 3] The method according to claim 2 characterized in that the pressure inside the vacuum chamber is set to 50 to 400 Pa to move and press the substrate.

[Claim 4] The method according to claim 2 or 3 characterized in that a gap of 100 to 1000µm is generated between the one end of the upper substrate and the seal line when the other end of the upper substrate is contacted with the seal line, and the both ends of the substrates are then subjected to moving and pressing for regulating a moving speed thereof to be less than 30 to 300µm/sec.

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[Claim 5] A method for laminating liquid crystal substrates characterized by including the steps of: forming a circular seal line having a height in a range of t<T<4t on a lower substrate, wherein t is a filling depth of a liquid crystal and T is a height of the seal line; arranging a lower substrate, on which a liquid crystal material is dropped into a space enclosed with a seal line, within a vacuum chamber; vacuum-absorbing a upper substrate within the vacuum chamber for opposing and arranging it to and on the lower substrate; vacuum-exhausting the inside of the vacuum chamber for setting

its pressure to a predetermined pressure; and moving and pressing at least one substrate toward and against the other one; and, joining both substrates.

[Claim 6] The method according to claim 6 characterized in that the pressure inside the vacuum chamber is set to 50 to 400 Pa to move and press the substrate.

[Claim 7] The method according to claim 5 or 6 characterized in that in order to arrange the other end of the upper substrate relative to the seal line at a predetermined gap when the other end of the upper substrate is contacted with the seal line, at least one substrate is moved and pressed toward and against the other substrate so that the upper substrate becomes an inclined state, and both substrates are joined.

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[Claim 8] A method for laminating liquid crystal substrates characterized by including the steps of: dropping a liquid crystal material into a space enclosed with a circular seal line on a lower substrate; arranging the lower substrate within a vacuum chamber; vacuum-absorbing an upper substrate within the vacuum chamber for opposing and arranging it to and on the lower substrate; vacuum-exhausting the inside of the vacuum chamber for setting its pressure to a first predetermined pressure; moving at least one substrate toward the other one to allow at least a portion of the upper substrate to be

contacted with or near the seal line of the lower substrate; additional vacuum-exhausting the inside of the vacuum chamber to make the second predetermined pressure less than the first predetermined pressure; pressing both substrates; and joining both substrates.

[Claim 9] The method according to claim 8 characterized in that the first predetermined pressure is set to 50 to 400 Pa and the second predetermined pressure is set to 10 to 50 Pa.

[Claim 10] The method according to claim 8 or 9 characterized in that it includes forming a circular seal line having a height in the range of t<T<4t on a lower substrate, wherein t is a filling depth of a liquid crystal and T is a height of the seal line.

[Claim 11] The method according to any one of claims 8 to 11 characterized in that in order to arrange the other end of the upper substrate relative to the seal line at a predetermined gap when the other end of the upper substrate is contacted with the seal line, at least one of the substrates is moved and pressed toward and against the other substrate so that the upper substrate becomes an inclined state, and both substrates are joined,

# [Title of the Invention]

# METHOD OF LAMINATING LIQUID CRYSTAL SUBSTRATES

## [Detailed Description of the Invention]

# 5 [Field of the Invention]

The invention relates to a laminating liquid crystal substrates constituting a liquid crystal panel in a liquid crystal display apparatus.

# [Description of the Prior Art]

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In the liquid crystal display device, the liquid panel is constituted of a structure having filling a liquid crystal material into a gap on the order of 5µm between a lower substrate and a upper substrate of translucency material, such as a glass substrate, and the like, via a circular seal line that is consisted of ultraviolet curable adhesives, etc., wherein the gap is held and arranged opposing therebetween and enclosed with the seal line.

In a joining method between the lower substrate and the upper substrate in the state that the liquid material material is filled therebetween, it is disclosed ,for example, in Japan Laid-Open Patent Publication No. 1998-

333157 that a liquid crystal dropping method includes applying adhesives over the upper substrate, forming one or a plurality of circular seal lines, dropping a liquid crystal material into the inside of the space enclosed with the seal line, arranging the upper substrate on it to make an alignment (a position alignment) between the upper substrate and the lower substrate, stacking the upper substrate with the lower substrate to press them until a gap between the upper substrate and the lower substrate becomes a predetermined gap, and irradiating ultraviolet rays to cure the adhesives of the seal line.

As a concrete example for such a method joining liquid crystal substrates, the method disclosed in Japan Laid-Open Patent Publication No. 2000-137253 will be described with reference to Fig. 4. First, as shown in Fig. 4 (a), the method includes applying a sealing material consisted of a ultraviolet curable adhesives on a surface for example, in a circle shape with 30μm in thickness to form a circular seal line 23, mounting and fixing a lower substrate 21 on a position determining table 26 within a vacuum chamber 25 via an elastic spacer 27, with the lower substrate having a space enclosed with the seal line 23 into which is dropped with a liquid crystal material 24, vacuum-absorbing a upper substrate by a absorption table 28 so that the 20 upper substrate is opposed to the top of the lower substrate 21 by opening

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the gap thereof, for example, by about 0.5mm, and in this state, regulating a position of the position determining table 26 in a horizontal direction to perform the alignment between the lower substrate 21 and the upper substrate 22.

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Subsequently, the method includes vacuum-exhausting the inside of the vacuum chamber 25 so that foams is not doped into the gap, moving down the absorption table by a pressing means 29, for example, in the state under an ambient pressure equal to or less than 100 Pa, to allow the upper substrate 22 to move in a vertical direction, in order to move it toward the lower substrate 21, joining between the upper substrate and the lower substrate by pressing them until the gap g therebetween becomes 5µm, and then, irradiating ultraviolet rays to cure the seal line 23, in order to complete the join therebetween.

Also, the gap g between the lower substrate 21 and the upper substrate 22, which is demanded the precision of submicron, is regulated by a vis between the lower substrate 21 and the upper substrate 22, a post spacer projected on the lower substrate 21, or a fiber filled with the adhesives of the seal line 23, and the elastic spacer 27 is also required to obtain the predetermined gap of the same precision degree, independently of

smoothness of the lower substrate 21, the upper substrate 22, the position determining table 26, and the absorption table 28.

## [Problem(s) to be Solved by the Invention]

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Accordingly, in order to prevent the doping of foams, since the pressure inside the vacuum chamber 25 is equal to or less than 100 Pa as described above, even though an absorption pressure in the absorption table 28 is about 20 to 30 Pa, their differential pressure does not exceed 80 Pa, and also, since an absorption force of the upper substrate 22 is low, it is apprehended that the very expensive upper substrate 22 or the lower substrate 21 may be damaged by having the upper substrate fallen during work, which has been performed with mechanical processes such as a fine thin film formation, etc.

By contrasting, although the absorption pressure of the absorption table 28 can be considered to be lower further, it is actually impossible to make higher the smoothness of the absorption surface of the absorption table 28 and the upper substrate than current smoothness, in order to fabricate an article on a commercial scale. As a result, in order to lower the pressure, the device will be large and at the same time, it will take time until the predetermined pressure reaches, thereby significantly reducing

productivity. In addition, although an electrostatic absorption can be considered instead of a vacuum absorption, the electrostatic absorption has adversely affect on elements on the substrates or static electricity has a risk to adversely affect on succeeding processes, thereby, it leads to a problem in generalization due to the limitation of an applicable substrates.

As consisting of the invention with considering the problems of a prior art described above, it is an object of the invention to provide a joining method of liquid crystal substrates that is capable of joining a upper substrate and a lower substrate with good productivity, without having a risk that foams will be doped into a gap therebetween.

### [Means for Solving the Problem]

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A method for laminating liquid crystal substrates of the invention includes dropping a liquid crystal material into a space enclosed with a circular seal line on a lower substrate; arranging the lower substrate within a vacuum chamber; vacuum-absorbing a upper substrate within the vacuum chamber for opposing and arranging it to and on the lower substrate; setting a pressure inside the vacuum chamber to 50 to 400 Pa; and moving and pressing at least one of substrates toward and against the other one, and, joining both substrates, whereby it can prevent foams from doping into the

gap by limiting the pressure inside of the vacuum chamber to 50 to 400 Pa, while even though the absorption pressure of the upper substrate is set to about 20 to 30 Pa so that the smoothness of the upper substrate and the absorption table may be reached a current smoothness at a short time, it can fabricate a good quality of an image displaying liquid crystal substrate with high productivity by absorbing and holding the upper substrate with high reliability.

Furthermore, it includes dropping a liquid crystal material into a space enclosed with a circular seal line on a lower substrate; arranging the lower substrate within a vacuum chamber; vacuum-absorbing a upper substrate within the vacuum chamber for opposing and arranging it to and on the lower; vacuum-exhausting the inside of the vacuum chamber to for setting its pressure to a predetermined pressure; and moving and pressing at least one of substrates toward and against the other one so that the upper substrate becomes an inclined state in order to arrange one end of the upper substrate relative to the seal line at a predetermined gap, when the other end of the upper substrate is contacted with the seal line; and, joining both substrates, whereby due to the contact of the upper substrate with the lower substrate at an inclined state and then pressing removing the inclination, the both substrates can be joined pushing the foams, which has the possibility of

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doping into the gap, from one end into the other end so that even though the pressure inside the vacuum chamber becomes high at some degree, it can prevent foams from doping into the gap, thereby fabricating a good quality of an image displaying liquid crystal substrate with high productivity.

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At this time, if the pressure inside of the vacuum chamber limits to 50 to 400 Pa to have the substrate moving and pressing, it is preferable to further prevent the foams from doping. Also, a gap of 100 to 1000µm is generated between the one end of the upper substrate and the seal line when the other end of the upper substrate is contacted with the seal line and the both ends of the substrates are then subjected to moving and pressing for regulating a moving speed thereof less than 30 to 300µm/sec, thereby obtaining the effect of preventing the doping of the foams more certainly.

Furthermore, it includes forming a circular seal line having a height in the range of t<T<4t on a lower substrate, wherein t is a filling death of a liquid crystal and T is a height of the seal line; arranging a lower substrate, on which a liquid crystal material is dropped into a space enclosed with a seal line, within a vacuum chamber; vacuum-absorbing a upper substrate within the vacuum chamber for opposing and arranging it to and on the lower substrate; vacuum-exhausting the inside of the vacuum chamber for setting

its pressure to a predetermined pressure; and moving and pressing at least one of substrates toward and against the other one; and, joining both substrates, whereby due to limiting the height dimension of the seal line to a low value, the space volume between the upper substrate and the liquid material can be reduced in state that the upper substrate is contacted with the seal line and upon pressing, the air amount discharged from the seal line is reduced correspondingly so that the air is hardly left and the foams can be prevented from doping into the gap, thereby fabricating a good quality of an image displaying liquid crystal substrate with high productivity.

At this time, if the pressure inside of the vacuum chamber limits to 50 to 400 Pa to have the substrate moving and pressing, it is preferable to further prevent the foams from doping. Also, in order to arrange the other end of the upper relative to the seal line at a predetermined gap when the other end of the upper substrate is contacted with the seal line, if at least one of the substrates is moved and pressed toward and against the other substrate so that the upper substrate becomes an inclined state, and both substrates are joined, it pushes the foams, which has the possibility of doping into the gap, from one end into the other end so that the doping of the foams into the gap can be prevented more further.

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Also, it includes dropping a liquid crystal material into a space enclosed with a circular seal line on a lower substrate; arranging the lower substrate within a vacuum chamber; vacuum-absorbing a upper substrate within the vacuum chamber for opposing and arranging it to and on the lower substrate; vacuum-exhausting the inside of the vacuum chamber for setting its pressure to a first predetermined pressure; moving at least one of substrates toward the other one to allow at least a portion of the upper substrate to be contacted with or near the seal line of the lower substrate; vacuum-exhausting the inside of the vacuum chamber more further to make the second predetermined pressure less than the first predetermined pressure; pressing both substrates; and, joining both substrates, whereby the upper substrate, which is absorbed and held in the first predetermined state, moves until contacting with the lower substrate and then pressed in the lower second predetermined pressure state, thereby preventing the foams from doping into the gap more completely so that a good quality of an image displaying liquid crystal substrate can be fabricated with high productivity.

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At this time, if the first predetermined pressure is set to 50 to 400 Pa and the second predetermined pressure is set to 10 to 50 Pa, it is preferable to rapidly decompress the upper substrate to the second predetermined pressure state while certainly absorbing and holding, if possible, it in the first

predetermined pressure, since the doping of the foams can be prevented completely. Also, if the circular seal line having a height in the range of t<T<4t is formed on a lower substrate, wherein t is a filling depth of a liquid crystal and T is a height of the seal line, it can preferably prevent the doping of the foams into the gap more further as described above by limiting the height dimension of the seal line to low value. Also, in order to arrange the other end of the upper relative to the seal line at a predetermined gap when the other end of the upper substrate is contacted with the seal line, if at least one of the substrates is moved and pressed toward and against the other substrate so that the upper substrate becomes an inclined state, and both substrates are joined, it pushes the foams, which has the possibility of doping into the gap, from one end into the other end so that the doping of the foams into the gap can be prevented more further.

## [Embodiment of the Invention]

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An embodiment of a method for laminating liquid crystal substrates of the invention will be now described with reference to Fig. 1 to Fig. 3.

Fig. 1 shows a process of producing a liquid crystal substrate in which a liquid crystal 4 is filled into a space enclosed with a seal line 3, which is formed into a gap g between a lower substrate 1 and an upper substrate 3.

First, as shown in Fig. 1(a), the method includes applying a sealing material consisted of a ultraviolet curable adhesives on a surface of the lower substrate 1 in a circle shape to form a circular seal line 3, dropping the liquid crystal material 4 into the space enclosed with the seal line 3, mounting and fixing the lower substrate 1 on a position determining table 6 within a vacuum chamber 5 via an elastic spacer 7. The position determining table 6 determines a horizontal direction position of the lower substrate.

The sizes of the lower substrate 1 and the upper substrate 2 are 550mm x 670mm. The lower substrate 1 and the upper substrate 2 is formed one or a plurality of an image displaying area (hereinafter, referred to as a display cell) depending of the number of a liquid crystal panels which are fabricated by the lower substrate 1 and the upper substrate 2, so that the circular seal line 3 is applied and formed to enclose the peripheral of the display cell every the display cell.

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A filling depth of the liquid crystal material 4 is, for example, 5µm, which is equal to a predetermined gap g every the display cell 4, to control the dropping amount accurately. Also, in state that the liquid crystal material 4 is dropped, its shape exhibits a mountain-type by viscosity as shown in Fig. 1(a). It is required to apply the seal line 3 with the liquid crystal material 4 in

an appropriate height, i.e., the height not to flow for the liquid crystal material 4 over the seal line, upon pressing the upper substrate presses relative to the lower substrate 1. In a prior art, the seal line has a height of about 30µm to be applied with a sufficient margin, but in the present embodiment, the height of the seal line is set to a height as low as possible within a range not to flow for the liquid crystal material 4 over the seal line. More specifically, as shown in Fig. 2, the height of the seal line is set to t<T<4, most preferably 2t<T<3T, wherein t is a filling depth of the liquid crystal material 4 and T is the height of the seal line 3. That is, the height of the seal line 3 is set to 5 to 20µm, most preferably 10 to 15µm, if the filling depth of the liquid crystal material is 5µm

Next, the method vacuum-exhausts the inside of the vacuum chamber 5 using the pressure of 50 to 400 Pa, most preferably about 150 Pa while vacuum-absorbing the upper substrate into absorption table 8 and insertion-arranging it the vacuum chamber 15. The absorption pressure of the absorption table 3 is set to 20 to 30 Pa which is a pressure range to be achieved at a short time, in particular without making a smoothness of the upper substrate or the absorption surface of the absorption table 8 excellent. As a result, the upper substrate can be absorbed and held with high productivity, while due to obtaining a sufficient pressure difference on the order of 100 Pa, which is between 50 and 400 Pa, within the vacuum chamber,

it is not necessary to apprehend a damage caused by falling the upper substrate 2 absorbed and held inadvertently.

Subsequently, a movement pressing means 9, which moves the absorption table 8 up and down and applies a pressure load, allows the upper 5 substrate 2 absorbed and held to be opposed to the top of the lower substrate 1 in the absorption table 8 by opening the gap D, for example, at about o.5 to 1mm. The movement pressing means 9 recognizes as an image position determining marks with which the upper substrate 1 and the lower substrate opposed to each other, respectively, is arranged to adjust the position determining table 6 in order to match them. Four corners of the absorption table 8 are arranged with height regulating members 10 and a position opposed to the height regulating members 10 with which the four corners of the absorption table 8 are arranged is arranged with a up and down direction linear actuators 11, thereby falling the absorption table 8 until each the height regulating member 10 is contacted with the linear actuators 11, as shown in Fig. 1(b). The length dimension of each height regulating member 10 is adjusted and set, so that it allow the one end of the upper substrate 2 to contact the seal line 3 and the other end of the upper substrate 2 to contact each linear actuator 11 at only a predetermined gap d, for example, about 100 µm relative to the lower substrate in state that the

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inclination of the upper substrate 11 keeps held, as shown in Fig. 3.

Next, the inside of the vacuum chamber 5 is vacuum-exhausted to increase the vacuum degree thereof by elevating the pressure state of the vacuum chamber from P1 of 50 to 400 Pa to P2 of 10 to 50 Pa. Also, all of the linear actuators 11 fall down at a predetermined speed V on the order of 30 to 300 pm/sec to remove the inclination of the upper substrate 2 along with the absorption table 8 and move it toward the upper substrate 1. The movement pressing means 9 presses the lower substrate 1 and the upper substrate 2at a predetermined pressure until the gap therebetwee becomes a predetermined gap g. Thereby, the lower substrate 1 and the upper substrate 2 is joined pushing the foams, which has the possibility of doping into the gap, from one end into the other end. After this, the seal line 3 is cured by irradiating the ultraviolet ray to complete the join of the upper substrate 2 with the lower substrate 1.

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According to the constitution of the present embodiment, due to limiting a pressure inside the vacuum chamber 5 to 50 to 400 Pa, even though the absorption pressure of the upper substrate 2 is set to about 20 to 30 Pa at a short time, the liquid crystal substrate can be fabricated with high productivity by absorbing and holding the upper substrate 2 with high

reliability.

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Furthermore, when the one end of the upper substrate is contacted with the seal line, the other end of the upper substrate moves to be subjected to inclination to have a predetermined gap equal to or greater than 100µm relative to the lower substrate 1 and thus, presses toward the lower substrate 1, whereby due to contacting the upper substrate with the lower substrate at an inclined state and then pressing removing the inclination, both substrates can be joined pushing the foams, which has the possibility of doping into the gap, from one end into the other end so that even though the pressure inside the vacuum chamber 5 becomes high at some degree, it can prevent foams from doping into the gap, thereby producing a good quality of an image displaying liquid crystal substrate with high productivity.

A predetermined gap d is very suitable to have about 100 to 1000µm. Activating the pressure equal to or less than 100µm, an elastic spacer 7, which is between the position determining tables 6 of the lower substrate 1, is elastically deformed so that it is projected from the other end of the lower substrate 1, and thus it cannot obtain the action sufficiently by offsetting inclination amount. By contrasting with this, in the pressure equal to or greater than 1000µm, moving time is needed, effect is reduced relatively, and

productivity is reduced.

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Furthermore, due to moving and pressing by regulating the falling speed V from the inclination state to 30 to 300µm/sec using the linear actuator 11, it obtains the effect that the doping of the foams can be prevented certainly. When the number of the display cell on the substrates 1, 2 is small, the falling speed V can set high, because it tends to miss the foams from the space enclosed with the seal line 3. In the mean time, when the number of the display cell is large, the falling speed V can preferably set low, because both substrates 1, 2 is approximately parallel to each other in other end thereof to make the discharge of the foams in each of the spaces enclosed with the seal line 3 difficult.

Moreover, by setting the height T of the seal line 3 to the range of t<T<4t on a lower substrate 1 to limit the height dimension of the seal line to a low value, wherein t is a filling depth of a liquid crystal, the space volume between the upper substrate 2 and the liquid material 4 can be reduced in state that the upper substrate 2 is contacted with the seal line 3 and upon pressing, the air amount discharging from the seal line is reduced correspondingly so that the air is hardly left correspondingly, thereby preventing the doping of he foams into the gap more completely.

The pressure inside the vacuum chamber 5 is set to 50 to 400 Pa and the upper substrate 2 absorbed and held in the absorption table 8 moves toward the lower substrate 1, and after at least a portion of the upper substrate 2 moves to be contacted with or near the seal line 3 of the lower substrate 1, the inside of the vacuum chamber 5 vacuum-exhausts more further to make the pressure within the vacuum chamber into a pressure state of 10 to 50 Pa so that both substrates 1, 2 is pressed and joined, whereby the upper substrate 2, which is certainly absorbed and held in the relatively high pressure state of 50 to 400 Pa, moves until contacting with the lower substrate 1 and then pressed in the pressure state of 10 to 50 Pa, thereby preventing the foams from doping into the gap more completely.

According to the aspect of the present embodiment, a good quality of an image displaying liquid crystal substrate can be fabricated with good productivity.

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Also, the upper substrate 2 moves toward the lower substrate 1 for pressing in the present embodiment. By contrasting, it goes without saying that the lower substrate 1 is capable of moving toward the upper substrate 1 for pressing. In addition, even thought the height regulating member 10 and a linear actuator 11 are used as a means for joining at a predetermined speed

after having the upper substrate 2 inclined, the invention is not limited thereto, but can be arbitrarily constituted so that the movement pressing means 9, etc., can have such functions.

Also, in the embodiments described above, even though it vacuum-exhausts the vacuum chamber until 10 to 50 Pa upon performing a pressing process after limiting the pressure inside the vacuum chamber to 50 to 400 Pa, it may be accepted to limit the pressure to 50 to 400 Pa to press and join both substrates 1, 2 using the limited pressure, in order to prevent the doping of the foams. Furthermore, by contrasting, if the vacuum chamber is vacuum-exhausted until 10 to 50 Pa upon performing the pressing process, it is not necessary to limit the pressure inside the vacuum chamber 5 to 50 to 400 Pa, but may accept a pressure higher than that as above. However, if the chamber is vacuum-exhausted in the pressure as above, it can be vacuum-exhausted until 10 to 50 Pa at a short time to enhance productivity.

Furthermore, in view of performing the inclined join of the upper substrate 2 or the height limitation of the seal line 3, they can be performed separately to obtain effects required. However, by suitable combination of each technical means, the doping of the foams can be prevented effectively with good productivity.

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## [Effect of the Invention],

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According to a liquid crystal substrate join method of the invention, it can prevent foams from doping into the gap by limiting the pressure inside of the vacuum chamber to 50 to 400 Pa, while even though the absorption pressure of the upper substrate is set so that the smoothness of the upper substrate and the absorption table may be reached a current smoothness at a short time, it can absorb and hold the upper substrate with high reliability.

Also, by contacting the upper substrate with the lower substrate at an inclined state and then pressing removing the inclination, the both substrates can be joined pushing the foams, which has the possibility of doping into the gap, from one end into the other end so that even though the pressure inside the vacuum chamber becomes high at some degree, it can prevent foams from doping into the gap.

Furthermore, by limiting the height dimension of the seal line to a low value in the range of t<T<4t, wherein t is a filling depth of a liquid crystal, the space volume between the upper substrate and the liquid material can be reduced in state that the upper substrate is contacted with the seal line and upon pressing, the air amount discharging from the seal line is reduced so that the air is hardly left, thereby preventing the doping of he foams into the

gap.

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In addition, the upper substrate, which is absorbed and held in the relatively high first predetermined state, moves until contacting with the lower substrate and then pressed in the lower second predetermined pressure state, thereby preventing the foams from doping into the gap more certainly.

According to the description above, the invention can practice the methods separately or with combination thereof so that a good quality of an image displaying liquid crystal substrate can be fabricated with high productivity.

# [Description of Drawings]

Fig. 1 is a cross section diagram showing a liquid crystal joining process according to one embodiment of the invention.

Fig. 2 is an explanation diagram showing a height dimension of a seal line in the same embodiment.

Fig. 3 is an explanation diagram showing an inclined state of an upper substrate in the same embodiment.

Fig. 4 is a cross section showing a liquid crystal joining process according to an example of a prior art.

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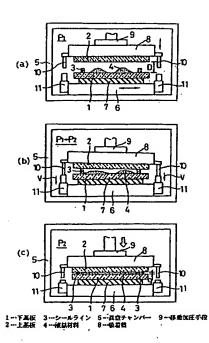
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## (54) 【発明の名称】 被品基板の貼り合わせ方法

## (57)【要約】

【課題】 下基板と上基板の間のギャップ内に気泡を混入する恐れなく、生産性良く、上基板と下基板を貼り合わせる。

【解決手段】 下基板1上の現状のシールライン3で囲まれた空間に液晶材料4を滴下し、この下基板1を真空チャンパー5内に配置し、真空チャンパー5内で上基板2を真空吸着して下基板1上に対向配置し、真空チャンパー5内を真空排気した状態で少なくとも一方の基板を相手側に向けて移動させて加圧し、両基板1、2を貼り合わせる方法において、真空チャンパー5内を50~400Paの圧力状態にすることにより、ギャップ内への気泡の混入を防止すると同時に、短時間の真空排気で確実に上基板2を吸着保持できるようにした。



#### 【特許請求の範囲】

【請求項1】 下基板上の環状のシールラインで囲まれた空間に液晶材料を滴下し、この下基板を真空チャンパー内に配置し、真空チャンパー内で上基板を真空吸着して下基板上に対向配置し、真空チャンパー内を50~400Paの圧力状態にして少なくとも一方の基板を相手側に向けて移動させて加圧し、両基板を貼り合わせることを特徴とする液晶基板の貼り合わせ方法。

【翻求項2】 下基板上の環状のシールラインで囲まれた空間に液晶材料を滴下し、この下基板を真空チャンバー内に配置し、真空チャンバー内で上基板を真空吸着して下基板上に対向配置し、真空チャンバー内を真空排気して所定の圧力状態にし、その後上基板の一端側がシールラインに接触した時点で上基板の他端側がシールラインに対して所定間隔あくように上基板が傾斜した状態を経るように少なくとも一方の基板を相手側に向けて移動させて加圧し、両基板を貼り合わせることを特徴とする液晶基板の貼り合わせ方法。

【
前求項4 】 上基板の一端側がシールラインに接触した時点で上基板の他端側とシールラインとの間に、100~1000μmの間隔が生じるようにし、その後基板の両端部ともその移動速度が30~300μm/secを超えないように規制して移動・加圧を行うことを特徴とする前求項2又は3記載の液晶基板の貼り合わせ方法。

【節求項6】 真空チャンバー内を50~400Paの 圧力状態にして基板の移動・加圧を行うことを特徴とす る節求項5記載の液晶基板の貼り合わせ方法。

【請求項7】 上基板の一端側がシールラインに接触した時点で上基板の他端側がシールラインに対して所定間隔あくように上基板が傾斜した状態を経るように少なくとも一方の基板を相手側に向けて移動させて加圧し、両基板を貼り合わせることを特徴とする請求項5又は6記載の液晶基板の貼り合わせ方法。

 して第1の所定圧力状態にし、その後少なくとも一方の 基板を相手関に向けて移動させ、上基板の少なくとも一 部が下基板のシールラインに近接又は接触した後、真空 チャンバー内をさらに真空排気して第1の所定圧力より も低い第2の所定の圧力状態にして両基板を加圧し、両 基板を貼り合わせることを特徴とする液晶基板の貼り合 わせ方法。

【請求項9】 第1の所定圧力は50~400Paとし、第2の所定圧力を10~50Paとすることを特徴とする請求項8記載の液晶基板の貼り合わせ方法。

【請求項10】 下基板上に、液晶材料の充填深さを t、シールラインの高さをTとして、t<T<4tの範 囲の高さの環状のシールラインを形成することを特徴と する請求項8又は9記載の液晶基板の貼り合わせ方法。 【請求項11】 上基板の一端側がシールラインに接触

した時点で上基板の他端側がシールラインに対して所定間隔あくように上基板が傾斜した状態を経るように少なくとも一方の基板を相手側に向けて移動させて加圧し、両基板を貼り合わせることを特徴とする請求項8~10の何れかに記載の液晶基板の貼り合わせ方法。

#### 【発明の詳細な説明】

#### [0001]

【発明の属する技術分野】本発明は、液晶表示装置における液晶パネルを構成する基板を貼り合わせる液晶基板の貼り合わせ方法に関するものである。

#### [0002]

【従来の技術】液晶表示装置における液晶パネルは、ガラス基板などの透光性材料からなる下基板と上基板の間に紫外線硬化型接着剤などから成る環状のシールラインを介してそれらの間に例えば5μm程度の所定のギャップを保って対向配置し、そのシールラインで囲まれたギャップ内に液晶材料を充填して構成されている。

【0003】このように下基板と上基板の間のギャップに液晶材料を充填した状態で下基板と上基板を貼り合わせる方法としては、下基板の上に接着剤を塗布して1又は複数の環状のシールラインを形成し、そのシールラインで囲まれた空間の内部に液晶材料を滴下し、次いでその上部に上基板を配置して上基板と下基板のアライメント(位置合わせ)を行い、その後上基板と下基板を重ね合わせて上基板と下基板の間の間隔が所定ギャップになるまで加圧し、紫外線を照射してシールラインの接着剤を硬化させる液晶滴下方法が、例えば特開平10-333157号公報などにおいて開示されている。

【0004】このような液晶基板貼り合わせ方法の具体例について、特開2000-137235号公報に開示された方法を、図4を参照して説明する。まず、図4(a)に示すように、上面に紫外線硬化型接着剤からなるシール材を例えば厚み30μmで環状に塗布して環状のシールライン23を形成し、そのシールライン23で囲まれた空間に液晶材料24を滴下した下基板21を、

【0005】次に、ギャップ内に気泡が混入しないように、真空チャンパー25内を真空排気して例えば100 Pa以下の雰囲気圧力に保持した状態で、加圧手段29 にて吸着盤28を下降移動させて上基板22を下基板2 1に向けて垂直方向に移動させ、図4(b)に示すように、下基板21と上基板22の間のギャップgが5μmになるまで加圧し、下基板21と上基板22を貼り合わせる。その後、紫外線を照射してシールライン23を硬化させて貼り合わせが完了する。

【0006】なお、サブミクロンの精度が要求される下 基板21と上基板22の間のギャップ度は、下基板21と上基板22の間に介在されたビースや下基板21に突 設されたポストスペーサやシールライン23の接着剤に 充填されたファイバによって規制され、また下基板21、上基板22、位置決めテーブル26、吸着盤28の 平面度に関わりなく加圧によって上記所定のギャップ度 の精度を確保するのに弾性スペーサ27が寄与している。

#### [0007]

【発明が解決しようとする課題】ところが、気泡の混入を防止するため、真空チャンバー25内を上記のように100 P a 以下の圧力状態にしているため、吸着盤28における吸着圧を20~30 P a 程度にしても、その差圧は80 P a 程度しかなく、上基板22の吸着力が小さいために作業中に上基板22が不測に落下し、微細な薄膜形成などの加工処理が施されて非常に高価である上基板22や下基板21を損傷させる恐れがあるという問題があった。

【0008】これに対して、吸稽盤28の吸着圧を更に低くすることも考えられるが、吸稿盤28の吸着面と上基板22の平面度を現状以上に高くすることは商品化する上で現実的に不可能であり、そのため圧力を低くするには装置が大型化するとともに所定の圧力にするまでに時間がかかり、生産性を著しく低下させるという問題がある。また、真空吸着に代えて静電吸着を適用することも考えられるが、静電吸着は基板上の紫子に悪影響を与えたり、後続する工程で静電気が悪影響を与える恐れがあり、適用できる基板が限られて汎用性がないという問題がある。

【0009】本発明は、上記従来の問題に鑑み、下基板と上基板の間のギャップ内に気泡を混入する恐れなく、生産性良く、上基板と下基板を貼り合わせることができる液晶基板の貼り合わせ方法を提供することを目的としている。

#### [0010]

【課題を解決するための手段】本発明の液晶基板の貼り合わせ方法は、下基板上の環状のシールラインで囲まれた空間に液晶材料を滴下し、この下基板を真空チャンバー内に配置し、真空チャンバー内で上基板を真空吸着して下基板上に対向配置し、真空チャンバー内を50~400Paの圧力状態にし、少なくとも一方の基板を相手側に向けて移動させて加圧し、両基板を貼り合わせるものであり、真空チャンバー内の圧力状態を50~400Paに限定することによって、ギャップ内に気泡が混入するのを防止でき、かつ上基板の吸着圧力を、上基板及び吸着盤の平面度が現行のままでも短時間で達成することができる20~30Pa程度に設定しても、高い信頼性をもって上基板を吸着保持することができ、画像表示品質の良い液晶基板を生産性良く製造することができる

【0011】また、下基板上の環状のシールラインで囲 まれた空間に液晶材料を滴下し、この下基板を真空チャ ンバー内に配置し、真空チャンバー内で上基板を真空吸 着して下基板上に対向配置し、真空チャンバー内を真空 排気して所定の圧力状態にし、その後上基板の一端側が シールラインに接触した時点で上基板の他端側がシール ラインに対して所定間隔あくように上基板が傾斜した状 態を経るように少なくとも一方の基板を相手側に向けて 移動させて加圧し、両基板を貼り合わせると、上基板が 下基板に対して傾斜した姿勢で接触した後、その傾斜を 無くしつつ加圧するので、ギャップ内に混入される可能 性のある気泡を一端側から他端側に押し出しながら貼り 合わせることができ、真空チャンバー内の圧力がある程 度高くてもギャップ内への気泡の混入を防止でき、画像 表示品質の良い液晶基板を生産性良く製造することがで きる.

【0012】ここで、真空チャンバー内の圧力状態を上記のように50~400Paにして基板の移動・加圧を行うと、気泡の混入をさらに防止できて好ましい。また、上基板の一端側がシールラインに接触した時点で上基板の他端側とシールラインとの間に、100~1000μmの間隔が生じるようにし、その後基板の両端部ともその移動速度が30~300μm/secを越えないように規制して移動・加圧を行うと、上記気泡の混入防止効果が確実に得られる。

【0013】また、下基板上に、液晶材料の充填深さを t、シールラインの高さをTとして、tくTく4tの範 囲の高さの環状のシールラインを形成し、シールライン で囲まれた空間に液晶材料を滴下した下基板を真空チャンバー内に配置し、真空チャンバー内で上基板を真空吸 着して下基板上に対向配置し、真空チャンバー内を真空 排気して所定の圧力状態にし、少なくとも一方の基板を 相手側に向けて移動させて加圧し、両基板を貼り合わせ ると、シールラインの高さ寸法を低く限定したことによ り、上基板がシールラインに接触した状態で、上基板と 液晶材料との間の空間容積を小さくでき、その分加圧時 にシールラインから逃出させる空気量が少なくて済む分 空気が残り難く、ギャップ内への気泡の混入を防止で き、画像表示品質の良い液晶基板を生産性良く製造する ことができる。

【0014】ここで、真空チャンバー内の圧力状態を上記のように50~400Paにして基板の移動・加圧を行うと、気泡の混入をさらに防止できて好ましい。また、上基板の一端側がシールラインに接触した時点で上基板の他端側がシールラインに対して所定間隔あくように上基板が傾斜した状態を経るように少なくとも一方の基板を相手側に向けて移動させて加圧し、両基板を貼り合わせると、ギャップ内に混入される可能性のある気泡を一端側から他端側に押し出すことができ、さらにギャップ内への気泡の混入を防止できて好ましい。

【0015】また、下基板上の環状のシールラインで囲まれた空間に液晶材料を滴下し、この下基板を真空チャンバー内に配置し、真空チャンバー内で上基板を真空チャンバー内に配置し、真空チャンバー内を真空排気して第1の所定圧力状態にし、その後少なくとも一方の基板を相手側に向けて移動させ、上基板の少なくとも一部が下基板のシールラインに近接又は接触した後、真空チャンバー内をさらに真空排気して第1の所定圧力よりも低い第2の所定の圧力状態にして両基板を加圧し、両基板を貼り合わせると、比較的高い第1の所定圧力状態で上基板を確実に吸管保持して下基板に接触するまで移動させた後、それよりも低い第2の所定の圧力状態で加圧することによりギャップ内に気泡が混入するのを確実に防止することができ、画像表示品質の良い液晶基板を生産性良く製造することができる。

【0016】ここで、第1の所定圧力を50~400P aとし、第2の所定圧力を10~50Paとすると、可 及的に低い第1の所定圧力で上基板を確実に吸着保持で きるとともに第2の所定圧力状態に速やかに減圧して気 泡の混入を確実に防止できて好ましい。また、下基板上 に、液晶材料の充填深さをt、シールラインの高さをT として、tくTく4tの範囲の高さの環状のシールライ ンを形成すると、シールラインの高さ寸法を低く限定し たことにより、上記のようにさらにギャップ内への気泡 の混入を防止できて好ましい。また、上基板の一端側が シールラインに接触した時点で上基板の他端側がシール ラインに対して所定間隔あくように上基板が傾斜した状 態を経るように少なくとも一方の基板を相手側に向けて 移動させて加圧し、両基板を貼り合わせると、上記のよ うにギャップ内に混入される可能性のある気泡を一端側 から他端側に押し出すことができ、さらにギャップ内へ の気泡の混入を防止できて好ましい。

#### [0017]

【発明の実施の形態】以下、本発明の液晶基板の貼り合

わせ方法の一実施形態について、図1~図3を参照して 説明する。

【0018】図1に、下基板1と上基板2の間のギャップ度に形成されたシールライン3で囲まれた空間に液晶材料4を充填して成る液晶基板を製造する工程を示す。まず、図1(a)に示すように、下基板1の上面に紫外線硬化型接着剤からなるシール材を現状に塗布して現状のシールライン3を形成し、そのシールライン3で囲まれた空間に液晶材料4を滴下し、この下基板1を真空チャンバー5内の位置決めテーブル6は下基板1の水平方向の位置決めを行う。

【0019】下基板1と上基板2は例えば550mm×670mmの大きさであり、下基板1及び上基板2には、これら基板1、2で作製する液晶パネルの数に応じて1又は複数の画像表示域(以下、表示セルと称する)が形成されており、環状のシールライン3は各表示セル毎にその周囲を取り囲むように塗布形成する。

【0020】液晶材料4は、各表示セル毎にその充填深 さが所定のギャップgと等しい、例えば5μmになるよ うにその滴下量が正確に制御される。なお、液晶材料4 を滴下した状態ではその粘性によって図1(a)に示す ように山形を呈する。シールライン3は、下基板1と上 基板2を加圧するときに、この液晶材料4が不測にその 上を乗り越えてはみ出すことがないように、適当な高さ で塗布する必要があり、従来は十分な余裕を持って30 μm程度になるように塗布していたが、本実施形態で は、液晶材料4がはみ出さない範囲でできるだけ低い高 さに設定している。 具体的には、 図2に示すように、 液 晶材料4の充填深さをt、シールライン3の高さをTと して、t<T<4t、好適には2t<T<3Tに設定し ている。すなわち、液晶材料4の充填深さが5 µmとし て、シールライン3の高さを5~20μm、好適には1  $0\sim15\mu$ mに設定している。

【0021】次に、上基板2を吸着盤8にて真空吸着し、真空チャンバー5内に挿入配置するとともに、真空チャンバー5内を50~400Pa、好適には150Pa程度の圧力P1に真空排気する。吸着盤8の吸着圧力は、上基板2や吸着盤8の吸着面の平面度を特別に良くしなくても短時間で達成できる圧力範囲である20~30Paに設定されている。これによって上基板2を生産性良く吸着保持でき、かつ真空排気された真空チャンバー5内の50~400Paの圧力との間で100Pa程度の十分な圧力差が得られ、吸着保持した上基板2が不測に落下して損傷する恐れを無くすことができる。

【0022】次に、吸着盤8の上下移動と加圧力の負荷を行う移動加圧手段9にて吸着盤8にて吸着保持した上基板2を下基板1の上部に例えば0.5~1mm程度の間隔Dをあけて対向配置し、対向配置された上基板1と下基板2にそれぞれ設けられている位置決めマークを画

像認識し、それらが一致するように位置決めテーブル6 を位置調整する。

【0023】吸着盤8の四隅部には高さ規制部材10が配設され、位置決めテーブル6の四隅部の高さ規制部材10に対向する位置には上下方向のリニアアクチュエータ11が配設されており、次に、図1(b)に示すように、各高さ規制部材10がリニアアクチュエータ11に当接するまで吸着盤8を下降させる。各高さ規制部材10は、図3に示すように、上基板2の一端側がシールライン3に接触し、上基板2の他端側は下基板1に対して例えば100μm程度以上の所定間隔はだけあくように上基板2が傾斜している状態でそれぞれリニアアクチュエータ11に当接するようにその長さ寸法が調整設定されている。

【0024】次に、真空チャンパー5内を真空排気し、その圧力状態を50~400 PaのP1 から10~50 PaのP1 まで真空度を高める。また、すべてのリニアアクチュエータ11を30~300μm/sec程度の所定の速度Vで下降動作させ、吸着盤8とともに上基板2を上記傾斜姿勢からその傾斜を無くしつつ、下基板1に向けて移動させ、その後、図1(c)に示すように、引き続いて移動加圧手段9にて下基板1と上基板2の間が所定のギャップgになるまで所定の加圧力にて加圧する。これによって、下基板1と上基板2が、それらの間のギャップg内に混入される可能性のある気泡を一端関から他端側に押し出しながら貼り合わされる。その後、紫外線を照射してシールライン3を硬化させ、上基板2と下基板1の貼り合わせが完了する。

【0025】以上の本実施形態の構成によれば、真空チャンバー5内の圧力状態を50~400Paに限定していることによって、上基板2の吸着圧力を短時間で達成することができる20~30Pa程度に設定しても、高い信頼性をもって上基板2を吸着保持することができ、液晶基板を生産性良く製造することができる。

【0026】また、上基板2を、その一端側がシールライン3に接触した時点で他端側が下基板1に対して100μm以上の所定間隔dだけあくように傾斜した状態を経るように移動させて下基板1に向けて加圧することによって、上基板2が下基板1に対して傾斜した姿勢で接触した後、その傾斜を無くしつつ加圧することができ、それによって下基板1と上基板2間のギャップ内に混入される可能性のある気泡を一端側から他端側に押し出しながら貼り合わせることができ、真空チャンバー5内の圧力がある程度高くてもギャップョ内への気泡の混入を防止でき、画像表示品質の良い液晶基板を製造することができる。

【0027】所定間隔dは100~1000μm程度が 好適である。100μm以下では、加圧力が作用すると 下基板1と位置決めテーブル6間に介装された弾性スペ ーサ7が弾性変形して下基板1の他端側の浮き上がりに よって傾斜量が相殺され、上記作用が十分に得られなくなり、逆に1000µm以上では移動に時間を要する割に効果が向上せず、生産性を低下させるだけになる。

【0028】また、傾斜姿勢からのリニアアクチュエータ11による下降速度 Vを、30~300μm/sec程度の速度に規制して移動・加圧を行うことにより、気泡の混入防止効果が確実に得られる。基板1、2上の表示セル数が少ない場合には、シールライン3で囲まれた各空間から気泡を逃がし易いので、この下降速度 Vを高く設定することができる。一方、表示セル数が多い場合には、基板1、200倍端関では両基板1、2が殆ど平行となっているためシールライン3で囲まれた各空間の気泡を逃がし難いので、下降速度 Vを低く設定するのが好ましい

【0029】また、下基板1上のシールライン3の高さをT、液晶材料4の充填深さをtとして、tくTく4tの範囲にし、シールライン3の高さ寸法を低く限定しているので、上基板2がシールライン3に接触した状態で、上基板2と液晶材料4との間の空間容積を小さくでき、その分加圧時にシールライン3から逃出させる空気量が少なくて済み、その分空気が残り難く、ギャップ内への気泡の混入をより確実に防止できる。

【0031】本実施形態によれば、以上のようにして画像表示品質の良い液晶基板を生産性良く製造することができる。

【0032】なお、上記実施形態では、下基板1に対して上基板2を移動させて加圧するようにしたが、逆に上 基板2に対して下基板1を移動させて加圧してもよいことは言うまでもない。また、上基板2を傾斜姿勢とした後所定速度で貼り合わせる手段として高さ規制部材10とリニアアクチュエータ11を用いたが、それに限定されるものではなく、移動加圧手段9にそのような機能を持たせる等、任意に構成することができる。

【0033】また、上記実施形態では真空チャンバー5内の圧力を50~400Paに限定した上で、加圧工程時にさらに10~50Paまで真空排気したが、50~400Paに限定したことにより、そのままの圧力で両基板1、2を加圧して貼り合わせても気泡の混入を防止することができる。また、逆に加圧工程時に10~50

Paまで英空排気するのであれば、それまでの真空チャンパー5内の圧力は上記のように50~400Paに限定する必要はなく、もっと高くても良いが、この程度に英空排気しておくことにより、加圧工程時の10~50Paの圧力状態まで短時間で英空排気できて生産性が向上する。

(0034)また、上記上基板2の傾斜貼り合わせやシールライン3の高さ限定についても、それぞれ単独で実施しても所要の効果を奏することができる。しかし、以上の各技術手段を適宜に組み合わせることによって、生産性良く、より効果的に気泡の混入を防止することができる。

#### [0035]

【0036】また、上基板を下基板に対して傾斜した姿勢で接触させた後、その傾斜を無くしつつ加圧することによって、ギャップ内に混入される可能性のある気泡を一端側から他端側に押し出しながら貼り合わせることができ、真空チャンバー内の圧力がある程度高くてもギャップ内への気泡の混入を防止できる。

【0037】また、シールラインの高さ寸法を、液晶材料の充填深さをも、シールラインの高さをTとして、もくTく4もの範囲の低い値に限定することによって、上 芸板がシールラインに接触した状態で、上基板と液晶材

料との間の空間容積を小さくでき、加圧時にシールラインから逃出させる空気量が少なくて済む分、空気が残り 難くでき、ギャップ内への気泡の混入を防止できる。

【0038】また、比較的高い第1の所定圧力状態で上 基板を確実に吸着保持して下基板に接触するまて移動させた後、それよりも低い第2の所定の圧力状態で加圧することによって、ギャップ内に気泡が混入するのを確実 に防止することができる。

【0039】以上のように、本発明によれば上記方法を 単独又は適宜に組み合わせて実施することによって、画 像表示品質の良い液晶基板を生産性良く製造することが できる。

#### 【図面の簡単な説明】

【図1】本発明の一実施形態における液晶基板貼り合わせ工程を示す断面図である。

【図2】同実施形態におけるシールラインの高さ寸法の 説明図である。

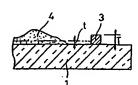
【図3】同実施形態における上基板の傾斜状態の説明図 である。

【図4】従来例の液晶基板貼り合わせ工程を示す断面図である。

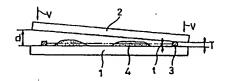
## 【符号の説明】

- 1 下基板
- 2 上基板
- 3 シールライン
- 4 液晶材料
- 5 真空チャンバー
- 8 吸着盤
- 9 移動加圧手段

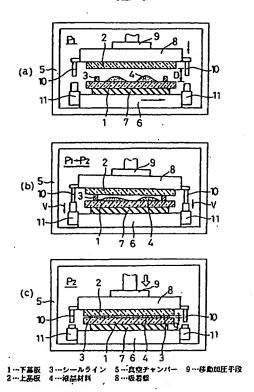
【図2】



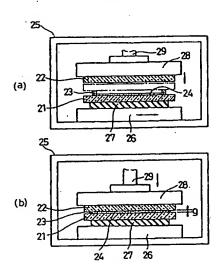
【図3】







# [図4]



## フロントページの続き

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